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ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) Population Division monitors fertility, mortality, and migration trends for all countries as a basis for producing the official UN population estimates and projections. Among recent demographic trends, two are prominent: (1) population decline and (2) population aging. Focusing on these two critical trends, a study addressed whether replacement migration is a solution to declining and aging populations. The study computed the size of replacement migration and investigated its possible effects on the population size and age structure for a range of countries with fertility patterns below the replacement level. It examined eight countries: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States. Two regions were also included: Europe and the European Union. The time period considered was from 1995 to 2050. According to UN population projections, Japan and virtually all the European countries are expected to decrease in population size over the next 50 years. Additionally, these countries are undergoing a relatively rapid aging process. Building upon these estimates and projections, the study considered six different scenarios with regard to the international migration streams needed to achieve specific population objectives or outcomes for the eight countries and two regions examined. Findings revealed that in the absence of migration, declines in population size will be even greater than those projected, and population aging will be more rapid. Although fertility may rebound, few believe that fertility in most developed countries will recover sufficiently to reach replacement level in the foreseeable future. The projected population decline and population ageing will have profound and far-reaching consequences, forcing governments to reassess many established policies and programs, including those relating to international migration. (Contains 28 tables, 27 figures, 40 references, a selected bibliography, and 20 annex tables.) (BT)

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